

OBITUARY.

SURGEON-GENERAL JOHN BUTLER HAMILTON,
A.M.S. (Retired).

THE many friends of Surgeon-General Hamilton will have learnt with the deepest regret of his unexpected death on October 25th, in his 64th year. A man of fine physique, abounding energy, and in appearance much short of his real age, he seemed destined for many more years of activity and usefulness. But about a year ago, after rigors and a smart febrile attack, he spat up a large quantity of pus from a hepatic abscess, which seemed to have been a latent legacy of long Indian service. His recovery was apparently marvellously rapid, but his more intimate medical friends regarded the state of his health with considerable misgiving, although he himself declared he felt no bad effects whatever. It is not improbable that this attack was the precursor of his fatal illness, perhaps through embolism. About four weeks ago, after a long and fatiguing bicycle ride, he complained of numbness of the right arm, and shortly afterwards complete right hemiplegia, with aphasia, developed, from which he never rallied.

John Butler Hamilton came of a military family, no fewer than five generations of which had served the Crown. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he graduated in Arts in October, 1859, and took the first place in the examination for the degree of M.B. in the following month. In this year also he became M.R.C.S. Eng. In January, 1860, he competed for a commission, and came out near the top of a batch of 27. After a short term in Chatham and Dublin he was sent to the Bahamas, and during his service there was in medical charge of an expedition sent after a pirate slaver to the coast of Cuba. Subsequently he served in Barbados, Jamaica, and British Honduras. He took advantage of a short period of service in Ireland to graduate M.D. in the University of Dublin in 1863. In the following year he was appointed to the Royal Artillery, and went out to India to join the 16th Brigade, with which he served till April, 1873, when, on the introduction of the unification system he was placed on the staff, and returned to this country, where he served for nearly two years. He was then promoted Surgeon-Major, and returned to India, where he served for nearly seven years, for two of which he was on the staff of the Surgeon-General of H.M. Forces as statistical secretary. He served in Ireland from 1882 to 1885, and then went out with the Suakim Expedition. He was appointed Field Inspector of the Lines of Communication; he was present at several engagements and was Senior Medical Officer with the Brigade of Guards which went out on relief on the day of the battle of Tofrek. He was present also at the capture and destruction of Tamai. For these services he received the medal and clasp, and the bronze star. On the breaking up of the Suakim Force he returned home, but on promotion to Brigade-Surgeon in 1886 he was almost immediately sent out to India, and appointed to the medical charge of the large station hospital at Lucknow. During his six years in this charge he had a very large experience of enteric fever, and wrote a monograph on the disease which was highly praised in a review published in these columns at that time. In August, 1886, he was selected to organize a hospital ship for the Burmese campaign; in the hottest time of the year this was a trying task, but in eight days the *Tenasserim* was transformed into a well-fitted hospital ship which did good service for several months. On this occasion he received the high commendation of the Surgeon-General and the thanks of the Government of India. He was subsequently appointed Honorary Surgeon to the Viceroy, Lord Lansdowne, in recognition of his services during epidemics of enteric fever and cholera at Lucknow. For some time he officiated as P.M.O. of the Allahabad and Lucknow districts. He was promoted Surgeon-Colonel in 1891 and was appointed P.M.O. of the Western District. He was subsequently transferred to the Home District, and in that capacity drew up a scheme for hospital accommodation on mobilization which received the praise of the then Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Cambridge. In 1894 he was sent out to South Africa as P.M.O. On promotion to Surgeon-General in October, 1895, he was

again appointed to the Western District, where he served as P.M.O. until he was retired under the age limit in October, 1898, having then served nearly 39 years, of which 27 were abroad, 25 in the tropics.

Shortly after his retirement he went for a tour round the world. But he was not a man to idle, and on his return home found many outlets for his abounding energy. He retained the keenest interest in the department which he had served so long. No man was better acquainted with its needs or with the disabilities under which its officers suffered, and the committees of the British Medical Association which have dealt with this matter have been greatly assisted by Hamilton's long acquaintance with every phase of the controversy. He was the Chairman of the Special Committee of the Association to which the consideration of the report of Mr. Brodrick's Committee was referred, and there is reason to believe that the representations of that Committee had no little weight with the War Office. He was also appointed at the annual meeting at Ipswich in 1900 a member of the Constitution Committee, as representing South Africa; he was a diligent attendant at the meetings of this Committee, and took a prominent part in its debates.

When the Duke of Abercorn formed a Committee for rendering surgical and medical aid to sick and wounded officers returning from South Africa, Surgeon-General Hamilton readily gave his services, and the advice and assistance which he rendered were very highly appreciated. In addition he gave personal services of the highest value; for when sick and wounded officers arrived at Southampton during the early stages of the war, Hamilton was present on behalf of the Committee to supervise the preliminary arrangements.

Surgeon-General Hamilton was a good sportsman and a first-rate rifle shot; during his service in India he was recognized as one of the surest shots in the country at the butts, and the prizes of various descriptions that he won at the Northern India Rifle Association competitions form a collection which is perhaps unequalled.

He was not a voluminous writer; but in addition to various official reports he communicated many articles to the medical press, including an essay on cholera, a disease from which he himself twice suffered while in India.

He was a man who impressed every one by his energy and enthusiasm, while his geniality and transparent honesty of character won him many friends. One of them sends us the following brief tribute to his memory:

"A brave, resolute, and generous spirit has thus departed, and one who probably did more than any other to set forth the grievances and plead the cause of his army medical brethren. It is well that the younger members of the service should know of the champion they have lost, for no man knew better every phase of the now happily past army medical controversy; and no man more fearlessly advocated reform, perhaps to his own personal detriment. Among his old friends and contemporaries Hamilton's memory will long be green and affectionately cherished."

WILLIAM ALEXANDER, M.D., J.P.,
Dundonald, Ayrshire.

THE grave has closed over the remains of one who during the course of a long life enjoyed the almost unique experience of being both a village practitioner and a consultant in his own county. His life began and ended in the village of Dundonald, in Ayrshire, and it was there that he built up the reputation for conscientious work which in time gained the cordial recognition of his fellows. Born on January 29th, 1815, when George III was King, he lived during the reign of five Sovereigns. At the time of his death he was probably the oldest graduate of Glasgow University living. When his medical life began the conditions under which medicine was taught and practised were removed so far from the present that a simple recital of some of them illumines a page of almost forgotten history.

When Dr. Alexander entered the old College of Glasgow as a student in the November term of 1831, travelling had still to be done by coach. The stethoscope, the clinical thermometer, and the microscope were unknown. The chemistry of the urine had not yet been directed to clinical purposes, and there was no antiseptic surgery; pathology and physiology